

ARS □ CSREES □ ERS □ NASS

Policies and Procedures

Title: Approval of Premium Class Air Travel

Number: 343.1

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Originating Office: Financial Management Division
Budget and Fiscal Services Branch

This Replaces: 350.5 Dated 7/19/79

Distribution: Headquarters, Areas, and Locations

This DIRECTIVE states policy, approval
authority, and procedures for using
premium class air accommodations

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1. ABBREVIATIONS

- AAO - Area Administrative Officer
- ABFO - Area Budget and Fiscal Officer
- AD - Area Director
- AM - Administrative Management
- ATR - Agriculture Travel Regulations
- FMD - Financial Management Division
- FTB - Frequent Travel Benefits
- FTR - Federal Travel Regulations
- LAO - Location Administrative Officer
- LC - Location Coordinator
- OFM - Office of Finance and Management, USDA
- RL - Research Leader
- U.S.C. - United States Code

2. DEFINITION

Premium class travel includes business class, first class, or any comparable travel class of service that is considered to be above the standard coach class.

3. AUTHORITIES

- ATR 1-3
- 5 U.S.C. 701-709
- FTR 301-3
- OFM letter dated March 15, 1990

4. POLICY

It is ARS policy to approve use of premium class accommodations only when travelers meet one of the following criteria:

- **URGENCY:** Space is not available in coach class or equivalent accommodations on any scheduled flight departing in time to accomplish the official travel which is so urgent that it cannot be postponed.
- **MEDICAL:** An employee is so disabled or otherwise physically impaired that

other accommodations cannot be used. A competent medical authority must substantiate this condition in writing.

- **SECURITY:** Security reasons require the use of premium class accommodations to successfully perform the Agency's mission.
- **TRAVEL ON FOREIGN CARRIERS:** Less-than-premium-class accommodations on foreign carriers do not provide adequate sanitation or health standards.
- **ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS:** Premium class accommodations result in the overall savings to the Government based on economic considerations, such as the avoidance of additional subsistence costs, overtime, or lost productive time that would occur while waiting for less-than-premium-class accommodations.
- **FTB's:** Premium class accommodations are obtained through the redemption of FTB's.

The Department has established the following order of precedence for the use of FTB's:

- Use to offset Government travel costs by obtaining free or reduced cost tickets.
- Use of upgrades to higher than coach class for travel that would be authorized as premium class in first five bulleted paragraphs under justifications above.
- Use to upgrade any official travel.

5. APPROVAL AUTHORITY

Authority to approve premium class travel is limited to one of the following U.S. Department of Agriculture officials:

- Assistant Secretary, Science and Education.
- The Administrator, ARS, has been delegated authority to approve the use of premium class service **only** when travelers use FTB's to upgrade to premium class service.

6. PROCEDURES

Traveler

- Prepare justification and receive approval to use premium class accommodations before beginning a trip. The justification must explain the circumstances relating to the criteria. Attach a medical certificate if disabled or otherwise physically impaired and other supporting documentation.
- Send to Director, FMD, through the following levels of management (as applicable):

RL/LC

- Review justification from traveler.
- Ensure reasons given for use of premium class service meet above-mentioned policy guidelines.
- Recommend approval/disapproval.
 - If approval is recommended, forward request to LAO for further processing.
 - If disapproved, return request to traveler.

LAO

- Review justification and ensure RL/LC has recommended approval.
- Coordinate processing with the AAO.

ABFO

- Review justification.
- Coordinate processing with AAO and AD/Division/Staff Director.

AD/Division/Staff Director

- Review justification.
- Recommend approval/disapproval.
 - If approval is recommended, forward to the Director, FMD, for processing.
 - If disapproved, return request to traveler through proper levels of management.

Director, FMD

- Review justification from AD/Division/Staff Director.
- Ensure current policy criteria have been met.
- Forward justification to Assistant Secretary, Science and Education, for consideration, through the Deputy Administrator, AM, and the Administrator, ARS.
- Forward results of the request to the traveler through applicable levels of management.

Traveler

- **After approval** is received and travel is completed, prepare a Premium Class Transportation Report (Exhibit 1) for audit purposes.
 - Include on the report:
 - Name, address, grade, and position or title of traveler.
 - Origin, destination, dates of premium class travel. If only segments of the trip were premium class travel, indicate the travel points of the segments.
 - Amount of difference between cost of premium class and coach accommodations.

- Justification for the premium class travel.
 - Signature of traveler.
-
- Mail the report to:

ARS Travel Coordinator
USDA, ARS, FMD
6303 Ivy Lane, Room 721
Greenbelt, Maryland 20770-1433

T. J. CLARK
Deputy Administrator
Administrative Management

Exhibit
1 Sample Premium Class Transportation Report

S A M P L E

PREMIUM CLASS TRANSPORTATION REPORT

March 1, 1991

John I. Doe
ARS, Beltsville Area
Systematic Entomology Laboratory
Building 046, BARC-West
Beltsville, MD 20705

Title: Entomologist

Grade: GS-12

Travel originated in Washington, DC, on December 1, 1990, with the destination of London, England, to attend the International Entomology Conference. Due to medical conditions, I was required to travel premium class. Attached is documentation which explains the medical conditions for the need to travel premium class. Prior approval was obtained before the travel began. The cost of the round-trip coach travel was \$1,000; the cost of premium class was \$3,000.

/s/ John I. Doe

Enclosure